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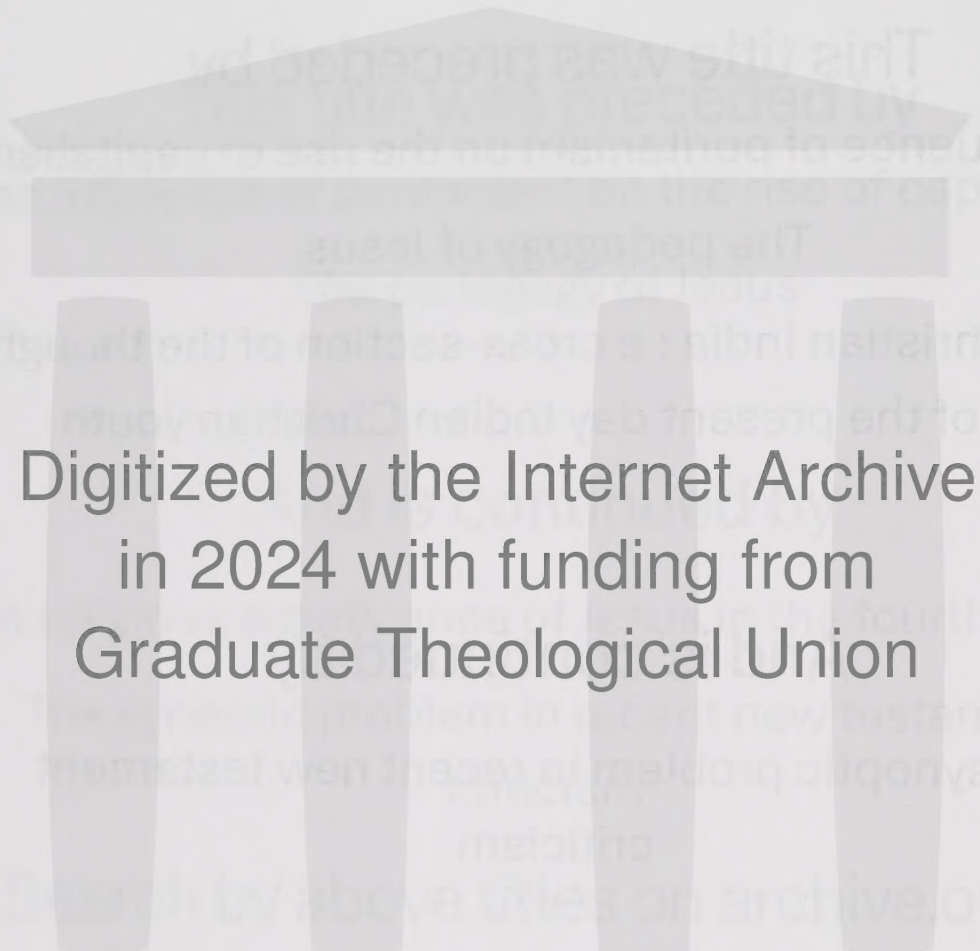
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THE RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS
IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

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THE RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS
IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

1. INTRODUCTION: CHRISTIANITY AT THE BEGINNING
OF THE SECOND CENTURY

The beginning of the second century was a time of great crisis in the history of the Christian religion. Christianity and Judaism had become separated. The Jewish element which had been dominant in the beginning of the new movement in religion, had now been forced to give way to the Greek element. It was evident that from now on Christianity was to find its support in the Greek world. With the death of the last apostles, the spiritual significance of the life of Jesus was beginning to be lost and only a historical memory, which was itself fast fading, now remained. In spite of its many hardships, the early Christian church had for a while been able to hold together in the hope of the early return of Christ. As the years passed, however, and there was no apparent sign that this hope was to be realized, the Christian leaders were aware that a dangerous situation was confronting them. Was the life and the death of Jesus Christ to be of no avail? Was His mission on earth to fail and the Christianity he had established to die out?

Paul had faced this situation in his time. He had endeavored to make the Christian faith a living message for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews. He had placed his emphasis on the risen Christ and had thus subordinated the

earthly life of Jesus, to the redeeming work of a risen Lord, The writer of the Fourth Gospel takes over this idea which Paul had worked out and combines it with the life of the historical Jesus. Christ was to this author the eternal Word incarnate in the Jesus of history. His work on earth was the beginning of the greater work he was to carry on after his resurrection. Thus his return had already taken place in the coming of the Spirit which was the Eternal Christ who in reality was the Jesus of history. It was his wonderful Personality which must draw the generations that followed. John himself had experienced this drawing power in his own life and therefore believed that his own experience could be the experience of others. It was his work so to present Jesus to the waiting world that they might believe, even as he had, and in their belief they might have life through his name.

John finds his way of expressing of his idea through the current philosophical ideas of the time. Already in later Old Testament thought, much more in rabbinical speculation, we can trace the idea of an intermediary between God and the world.¹ In Gn creation is attributed to the command or word of God, and this led to a quasi-personification of the divine word in later poetical descriptions of creation (P S 33:6) and providence (P S 107:20; 147:15; 148:8). Still more emphatically was revelation called "the word of the Lord," and hence such phrases occur as "the word of the Lord came," or

1 Scott, The Fourth Gospel, p. 149.

even "the Word which Isaiah saw" (Is 2:1, so Mic 1:1, Am 1:1), which tended to represent the divine utterance as a separate and continuous object, distinguishable from the spoken and written word. ¹ Wisdom is also described in Job and Proverbs, with something more than a poetical personification, as God's agent and co-worker. Peculiar significance was attached, by the later interpreters, to the various Old Testament allusions to the Word of God. By His "Word" He had created heaven and earth, and revealed Himself to His prophets. The actual hypostatizing of the divine Word in the doctrine of the Memra was probably subsequent to the time of Philo, but it was the outcome of a mode of thinking already common in Jewish theology. God, who was Himself the high and holy One, of purer eye than to behold iniquity, mediated His action through the divine Word. ²

Thus Hebrew thought tended to represent God's self-manifestation as mediated by an agent, more or less conceived as personal and yet blending with the divine personality itself. And there was already existing a well worked-out system of philosophy as represented in the philosophy of Philo. There can be little doubt in regard to the main sources from which John's Logos doctrine was derived. It had come down to him through Philo, after its final development in Greek philosophy. This Alexandrian Greek, who was at the same time an orthodox

¹ G.T. Perves, Hastings, Dictionary of Bible, art. Logos, Vol III, p.134.

² Scott, The Fourth Gospel, p. 150.

Jew, adopted the Logos theory of the Stoics and made it a means of transition from Judaism to Greek philosophy. He accepted the double meaning of Logos as both of reason and revelation and interpreted it to mean the revealing Word of God as found in the Old Testament Scriptures. In this way he was able to set forth the idea of the Logos as agent of God in his world. John takes over the Logos doctrine of Philo and makes it the agent of communicating his thought to the Greek world.

11. THE ETERNAL LOGOS IN THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST

Sanday thinks the Evangelist accepts Philo's philosophy in the main outline of his system. By the side of the Eternal, Philo has what he himself called "a second God" and this second God he called "the Divine Word." The Word was agent or instrument in creation.¹ However, it would be impossible to interpret the life of the historical person by means of a mere philosophical idea. John, therefore, seeks to overcome this difficulty by modifying the original conception of the Logos as held by Philo and so make it conform to his own idea. While Philo thought only of a divine principle, John thinks of a personal Being, and clothes him with flesh. Jesus becomes the incarnation of the divine Logos. The Logos is the divine principle of creation, apart from which the universe is

1 Sanday, The Criticism of the Fourth Gospel, p.189.

unintelligible; but it is the specific function of revealing the divine nature to men which immediately absorbs the Evangelist's attention.¹ "And the Word become flesh, and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."² This Being was co-existent with, and at the same time apart from God. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."³ As Schmiedel says the phrase, "the Word was God," means that the Logos was of divine nature (just as in 14:24 the words "words" "God is Spirit" mean: God is of a spiritual nature, has a spiritual nature). The Logos is not God Himself, but of like nature, similarly, we may expect that he was from the beginning, and so existed before the creation of the world, and with God, and that by him the whole world was made.⁴

Thus we have him represented as being with God from the very beginning, yet apart and distinct from him. God Himself was so pure and holy that he could not come into direct relation with his world. Therefore an intermediate person was necessary. This idea is brought out in the words: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."⁵ Jesus, the only begotten Son, is the incarnation means whereby men can communicate with God. He is the incarnation of the divine

1 Moffat, An Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament, p.519.

2 John 1:14.

3 John 1:1,2.

4 Schmiedel, The Johannine Writings, p.151.

5 John 1:18.

Logos issuing forth from the Father, revealing God to men. Jesus is the Light of the world and the Life-giver, because he is himself the Logos, one in essence with God. The relation of this Logos to Theos is warmed into the deeper relation of Son to Father, the only-begotten to the Eternal. The Fatherhood is essential to God, and therefore Eternal. God exercises delegated authority. "And the Father that sent me, he has borne witness of me. Yet have not his word abiding in you; for whom he sent, him ye believe not." ¹ Men are to worship God in the Person of his Son, Jesus Christ. "All may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father that sent him." ² Thus, Jesus as the Mediator between God and man is the principle on which the entire Gospel rests.

Although the doctrine of the Logos is subordinated to the main theme of the Gospel, yet we find it expressing itself in the very portrait which John gives us of Jesus. John had a different purpose than did the writers of the Synoptic Gospels, and therefore there is a change of emphasis in his Gospel. This is a spiritual Gospel dealing with the Person of the Divine Son of God. The sympathetic, suffering Jesus of the synoptic Gospel story is colored by the dominant purpose which the author is ever seeking to realize. "That ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name." ³

1 John 5:37,38.

2 John 1:50,51.

3 John 5:22.

Thus Jesus is always represented as the divine Son of God. This idea is set forth in different ways. We find it first in the miracles which he performed.¹ Instead of being deeds of compassion merely, as represented in the Synoptic records, here they are signs of supernatural power, performed in order that the glory of God may be manifested in Christ to all believers. "This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him."² "This is again the second sign that Jesus did. "When therefore the people saw the sign which he did, they said, this is of a truth that cometh into the world."³

The Evangelist chose from the Synoptic records, only those miracles most wonderful in character and of superhuman ability in order to heighten the feeling of the divine nature of the character he was portraying. Such is the feeding of five thousand where five small loaves and two fish are miraculously multiplied so that they were more than sufficient for five thousand people who ordinarily could not be fed with two hundred shilling's worth of bread. Again Jesus is represented as walking on the very stormy sea, which could not be accomplished by any one of merely human ability. Probably this idea is even better wrought out in the record of miracles which John alone of all the Evangelists has given to us. In the fourth chapter of his Gospel (vs.46-54) we have the story

1 John 1:50,51; 4:48,54; 6:2,26; 20:30,31.

2 John 2:11. 3 John 4:54.

of a cure of a child at a great distance by the mere word of Jesus. In the fifth chapter (vs. 2-9) there is the record of a cure after a sickness of long standing; in chapter nine (vs.1-7) Jesus cures a man blind from his birth; and in chapter eleventh (vs. 39,40) Jesus by a word, raises Lazarus from the dead. For four days this man had been dead and already decay had begun to set in, yet Jesus is able to bring back life even in this extreme case. What better evidence could the Evangelist bring forth to prove the supernatural power of Jesus and thus reveal his divine nature?

Another proof of the Logos nature is represented through the foreknowledge of events, which Jesus is represented as having. "Nathaniel said unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathaniel answered him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art king of Israel." ¹ In chapter four we are told that Jesus knew of the past life of the Samaritan woman. ² He knew of the nature of Lazarus' sickness. ³ He also knew of his own nature; his death and resurrection. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.....He spake of the temple of his body." ⁴ "Ye heard how I said to you, I go away, and I come unto you..... And I have told you before it come to pass, ye may believe." ⁵ "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is come that ye shall be

1 John 1:48,49.

2 John 4:7-26,39.

3 John 11:4ff.

4 John 2:19,21.

5 John 14:28,29.

scattered, every one to his own, and ye shall leave me alone." ¹

Jesus is represented as master of every situation, from the beginning to the end of his career he orders all the events. No outward circumstances impede or accelerate his movement toward his filial goal. This, likewise, is a proof of his divine nature. "And Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." ² "Jesus therefore saith unto them, My time is not yet come;" ³ They sought therefore to take him: and no man laid hand on him, because his hour was not yet come." ⁴ "No man took him, because his hour was not yet come." ⁵ We find that down to the very end of his life, he is still of his own accord ordering the events that transpire. "Therefore does the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." ⁶

Yet another way in which the writer of this Gospel emphasizes the divine nature of Christ is by mean of contrasting his nature with that of his associates. This is accomplished not so much by the events which he records, as by the elimination of human incidents which the Synoptic writers gives us. He is here represented, not as a frien of publicans and sinners, but in association with the religious leaders of the day. His miracles are not deeds of compassion but are signs of divine

1 John 12:32.

3 John 7:6.

5 John 8:20

2 John 2:3.

4 John 7:30.

6 John 10:17,18.

power. Here he stands aloof from the world. He is from another world and being of a different nature from the men about him, he moves alone, apart from them. In this attempt to exalt in the divine nature of Jesus, John has lost in his Gospel much of the real value of the life of the historical Jesus. Since the Logos was incapable of bearing the suffering of the human body in its physical and moral struggles, we miss human sympathy and compassion so prominent in the Synoptic Gospels. It is this element which gives the historical Jesus such a welcome in the hearts of suffering humanity. We have, in the Fourth Gospel, no account of the Temptation, the suffering in the garden, and the cry of agony from the cross. Such incidents would be inconsistent with the portrait of the divine Son of God. John was seeking through his Gospel to meet the need of his day; viz., that men might believe Jesus to be the Son of God and that believing they might have life. In this endeavour to do this, it was necessary to select his material with care, choosing only those incidents which would emphasize the divine nature. Of necessity this was accomplished at a great sacrifice to the historical life of Jesus. Yet we cannot fully appreciate the significance of Jesus' life until we have the fuller interpretation which John has made for us. Thus the sacrifice he was forced to make in accomplishing his purpose was in the end well worth the price he paid.

However, even in his masterful attempt to rid the divine Logos of his human qualities and to exalt his divine

nature, John was only partly successful. It is the historical Jesus, after all, which is behind the philosophical idea that makes its appeal to our hearts as we read the Gospel message. The Logos theory was only a means to an end. It accomplished its purpose in its own time. But the personal Christ in this Gospel, lives on for all generations.

III. JESUS, THE SON OF GOD: HIS WORK

A. The Significance of His Personality in the Synoptic Gospels

There were three names by which, according to the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus was wont to express the significance of His Personality. He was the Christ, the Son of Man, the Son of God. In his first expression and open announcement of his suffering and death, given while in the region of Caesarea Philippi, it is recorded that, after Peter's confession of him as the Christ, "he began to teach them, that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be killed, and after three days rise again."¹ What is meant by the words "Son of Man" here? The interpretation differs with different scholars. Dr. Bacon suggests the following as the historical facts resulting from this study:

(1) From the outset Jesus had a Son of Man doctrine. In taking up the Baptist's warning to repentance Jesus could not but refer to the Being of whom John had spoken as coming

¹ Mark 8:31 and parallels.

after him to winnow Jehovah's threshing-floor, gathering the wheat into his garner, and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire, John is not speaking of Jehovah, to whom the saying, "I am not worthy to loose his shoe's latchet" would not be applicable. Neither does he mean the Angel of the Covenant, of whom the phraseology derived from Malachi might incline us to think. The personality in mind is human, though endowed with miraculous powers, for it is when he hears of "the mighty works" done by Jesus that John sends to enquire: "Art thou the Coming One?" The personality is the same, though John did not use designative title.

(2) Jesus uses the distinctive title, but from the very nature of the case cannot have used it in application to himself during that period of his ministry wherein his messiahship was still a "secret." In all his utterances down to the revelation of this secret to the twelve at Caesarea Philippi, and all his public utterances down to the last, Jesus' use of the title must have been impersonal and objective, as who should say, "He whom Jehovah will send to execute his judgment." This necessary reserve is vividly illustrated in the incident of the Baptist's enquiry: for the reply is purposely ambiguous.

(3) After the close of the Galilean ministry, confronted with the alternative of abandoning his mission to Israel or carrying his message to the national center, Jesus reveals the fact that he has also a Son of David doctrine.

in spite of recent very high authority in denial of this, no other explanation of the course of events from this time on until the rallying of the scattered flock under leadership of Peter to the watchword "God hath made him both Lord and Christ." seems to him historically credible.

(4) The problem grows out of the relation of these two beliefs, in this chronological relation. Not first the doctrine of personal adherence to Jesus as Son of David, to which certain more or less incongruous attributes of the Son of Man becomes attached; but first a doctrine of the Coming One, the Son of Man, quite without reference to the person of Jesus, followed through pressure of harsh necessity by the appeal to a personal loyalty centering in Jesus as anointed leader of Israel toward a kingdom "according to the things of God."

(5) At Caesarea Philippi the alternative had also to be faced by rejection and death. This was indeed the more probable of the two. The kingdom must be given not to a Son of David here on earth, but to a Son of Man at the judgment-seat of the Highest. Until Calvary no follower of Jesus could have said by which road the deliverance must come. Dr. Bacon concludes thus, "Such is the progress of doctrine according to the testimony of New Testament: christology, first, the doctrine of the Coming One, the Son of Man; second, the doctrine of the Son of David, to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom; third, the discovery that "according to Scripture's"

the Servant humbled and obedient unto a sacrificial death, is also he who is exalted and made very high.

Now according to Dr. McCown, Jesus made use of the title of a Son of Man from Jewish literature. "This unique conception of the messiah as the Son of Man, interpreting the Danielic personification or angelic representative of Israel as real personality, second only to God in glory and power, is one of the most interesting developments in all pre-Christian apocalyptic literature, because of the use Jesus made of it and its contribution of the idea of pre-existence to the Christian conception of the person of Christ."¹ Jesus' self-consciousness, Professor McCown says, his estimate of his person and his mission, was unique. No sane human being, either before or since his time, has been able to use such a language of himself as he did. What does it imply? First, that he felt that he himself and no other was to realize the age-long expectations of his people. He was to inaugurate the reign of God. Under the circumstances of his baptism, the voice from heaven "Thou art my beloved Son," connoted a unique commission and consequently a unique relation to God. Therefore, he was the messiah. But, second, he was not merely a human king of the Davidic line, rather something far above that.² The title "Son of Man" connoted for Jesus fills with the double meaning of cross and crown, whether before him it had that wealth

1 McCown, The Promise of His Coming, p. 128.

2 McCown, The Promise of His Coming, p. 101, 102.

of significance or not. In any case it is quite plain that, firmly as Jesus believed in the coming of the reign of God, he believed with equal certainty that it could come only by the method of suffering and service.¹

Professor Dalman's interpretation of the Son of Man is very close to Professor McCown's idea. He says that "we need not suppose that Jesus attached great importance to the intrinsic sense of the expression. His calling Himself "Son of Man," really implied no more than that he was that one in whom this vision of Daniel was to proceed to its revelation. The term acquired its positive significance from the light in which it is placed by Daniel, and from what is said concerning it; just as the title "the Messiah," derives its meaning not so much from the literal sense of the word, as from the Scriptural testimony to the person thus entitled."² But we agree with Wendt's interpretation which says "as Son of Man, who is at the same time Son of God, he feels himself the same in kind with all true members of the kingdom of God, for these are all sons of men who are at the same time sons of God. But since, with emphatic articulation, he designates himself as the Son of Man and the Son of God, he nevertheless expresses that, along with that likeness in kind, he is aware of his pre-eminence, of being the One above all others, the representative of the kingdom of God, the Messiah. The name "Son of Man," as an indirect deno-

1 McCown, The Promise of His Coming, p.163,164.

2 Dalman, The Words of Jesus, p. 258.

tation of his Messianic calling and his Messianic dignity.¹

As to this idea, let us see the second Gospel.

Mark says that "he spake this saying openly." Although this suffering and death was, without doubt, to come to him in the faithful discharge of his duty, in that way in which the prophets had walked before him and been killed, so that the saying in this respect, as Professor Bruce has said, points to this suffering as "the highest instance of a general law, according to which all who are loyal to the divine claims must more or less suffer for righteousness' sake, " there is an unmistakable reference to the necessity that there was for the Christ so to suffer. It came immediately after the confession of him as the Christ by Peter, and the word was spoken "openly" in order to let all know what lay before Christ. It was something necessary for him - "the Son of Man must suffer many things," implying that it was divinely so appointed for him. Such a reference is also implied in the answer to Peter, "Thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." The subject uppermost was Peter's recognition of the Christ of God in the lowly Son of Man. In this he gave evidence of receptivity to divine teaching. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." But he manifested the reverse of this when he thought that it was not possible for the Christ to suffer. Jesus told him that

1 Wendt, The Teaching of Jesus, art. the Messiah as the Son of Man, pp.149,150.

such suffering was inevitable if he was to fulfill the mission to which he was called by God. It was necessary, moreover, that he should at this stage warn his disciples that his conception of the Christ was very different from theirs, or from the popular one. A Christ who should be the lowly "Son of Man" would certainly not commend himself to the ecclesiastical authorities, but should suffer at their hands, should even be put to death by them, and only afterwards come "in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (vs. 38). The divine reason for his death is not as yet declared; nor does his language, as reported, suggest anything of a sacrificial nature in it. It is simply, "be killed, and after three days rise again." It is at the same time extremely probable that he had already applied to himself the representation of suffering in order to achieve the triumph of the kingdom of God, contained in the Old Testament. But, in any view of it, his death was to come to him in fulfilment of his mission, and this was to bring in the kingdom of God.

Our Lord was on his last journey to Jerusalem, where he foresaw that he must meet his relentless enemies in such a way that he was certain to suffer at their hands. He was going up none the less, for he felt convinced that such suffering was inevitable in the fulfilment of his mission. On his way he had met with incidents which deepened his conviction of this necessity. A young ruler had come seeking to know how he should enter into eternal life. There was such earnestness

and sincerity about him that Jesus "loved him!" Yet he could not make the great renunciation necessary, but made instead "the great refusal." He showed how firmly he was bound by a golden chain to the things of this world, and how impossible it was to him to burst these bonds.. If he went away sorrowful, have been sorrowful. It showed him that something more must be done for men, if they were to be saved and become members of the kingdom of God. It led him to speak to his disciples about the impossibility of a rich man being saved, in such a way that they were "astonished exceedingly," and asked "Who then be saved?" To this only answer was, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.

2. The Significance of His Personality in the Fourth Gospel

According to Scott, the Fourth Evangelist takes up the Synoptic tradition, and accepts these three names (the Christ, the Son of Man, and the Son of God) as normative for his own theology. And Scott mentions three things about the difference between the view presented in the Synoptics and that of John.

(1/ The name "Christ" is in the first instance national, and connects Jesus with the history and the hopes of Israel. He knew Himself as the Christ to be the final outcome of the religious development of the Jewish people. He took on Himself the Messianic task of inaugurating that Kingdom of God which had been dimly prefigured in the ancient theocracy. In the mind of Jesus, however, the purely national significance

of the title of "Messiah" was far transcended.

(2) The name which He used most commonly while He was preparing His disciples for the Messianic proclamation, was that of Son of Man. The precise intention of this name is still one of the disputed questions of New Testament criticism, but the evidence would seem to point, almost conclusively, to its derivation from the passage in Daniel (7:13) which describes how, after the imperfect shapes, typifying the inferior kingdoms, there appeared in the prophet's vision "One like unto a Son of Man." Conscious of Himself as the Messiah, and yet desirous of assigning a higher connotation to the misleading title, He kept it in abeyance by the other name of "Son of Man." He thus transferred the emphasis from the merely national side to the religious side.

(3) The third name by which Jesus is designated in the Synoptics is that of "Son of God." It is true that He does not Himself claim the title, though He appears to do so by implication in at least one passage (Matt. 11:27, Luke 10:22). Nothing, however, is more certain in the life of Jesus than that He was conscious of a special relation to God, - a relation of unique closeness and dearness which He could only describe as one of Sonship.

Thus in the Synoptic Gospels we have the seeming paradox that "Son of Man" is the divine title on which Jesus bases His dignity and authority, while "Son of God" carries with it no such claim. It simply expresses His personal relation

to God, His self-surrender, in filial trust, to the higher will.¹

Turning now to the Fourth Gospel, we have these three Synoptic names presented to us with meanings entirely different. Here, as elsewhere, the eavangelist reads back into the historical data his own characteristic ideas, so that under the familiar title we have a new conception offered us of the Person and life of Jesus.

(1) The name of "Christ" loses its special significance, and becomes simply anequivalent for "Son of God." The claim of Jesus to be Christ was naturally the crucial issue in all discussion with the Jews, and it was necessary to maintain the claim in its strict traditional sense. The claim of Jesus to be the Messiah was not founded on descent from David, or birth in Bethlehem, or mystery in the mode of his appearance, or even on the strict fulfilment in his life of Old Testament prophecy. He was sent from God, and knew God; He had the water of life for all who were athirst; He spoke as no mere man could speak. So throughout the Gospel the Messianic title denotes nothing more definite than the higher nature and dignity of Jesus as the Son of God. In this interpretation of the Messianic name by a higher and more comrehensive one, John gives effect, no doubt, to Our Lord's own purpose.

(2) The title, with its suggestion of a mystery and a unique dignity in the human life of Jesus, lent itself

1 Scott, The Fourth Gospel, pp. 177 ff.

naturally to the Johannine conception, and is employed with much the same general effect as in the earlier Gospels. With the Synoptics it is an official name, by means of which Jesus brings into prominence a particular aspect of his Messianism. He declares that although man, he is the heavenly man of the prophet's vision, who was entrusted by God with the inauguration of His kingdom and would one day appear in glory to judge the world.

(3) We come, then, to the name which belongs distinctively to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. John, like the Synoptics, acknowledges a sense in which men have a filial relation to God. He believes that Christ "has given power to as many as received Him to become the sons of God. But his own Sonship was different in kind from the Sonship attainable by men. He was the "only-begotten," the Son "who is in the bosom of the Father."

To sum up, the Gospel presents the Sonship of Christ under two aspects, which are radically distinct, although to appearance they are brought into harmony. There is first the metaphysical conception, reaching back to Philo and the Greek thinkers, by which the Sonship is defined in terms of the Logos doctrine. God existed from all eternity in fellowship with another being, one with Him in essence though subordinate, who is therefore called His "Son." This "second God" of Philonic speculation was manifested, according to our Gospel, in Jesus Christ.¹

¹ Scott, the Fourth Gospel, pp. 202, 203.

The fundamental element in the entire teaching is the absolute oneness of the deity. The Gospel never taught the existence of two or three Gods, though the unity or solity embraced the divine indwelling in the entire universe, an infinite transcendence involving the internal relations of Fatherhood and Sonship, and all the mighty operations of the Spirit in the world and in the minds of men.

As we have already noticed, the Logos idea, so prominent in the Prologue, assumes a place of only secondary importance as we pass on into the body of the Gospel narrative. From this point on, the life of Jesus is the main interest of the Gospel. The Evangelist himself has had a deep religious experience, grounded in the life of the person Jesus. It is this same experience which he seeks to give to the world. "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father full of grace and truth." ¹ This marks the transition from the prologue to the body of the Gospel. The acceptance of this idea involves a wide departure from the traditional view of the life of Jesus Christ.

Jesus, then, is represented as the revealer of God to men. Moses revealed the law, but it remained for Jesus to reveal the truth. He is the supreme revelation of God, for "No one has seen God, but the only begotten Son has declared him." Hence in order to know God man must know the

1 John 1:14.

son, even Jesus Christ. "If ye had known me, ye would have seen him." ¹ "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him." ² Jesus, the revealer of God's glory, has acquainted men with God; in the degree that men know Jesus so also will they know the Father. Thus Jesus in His own Person is the revelation of God. This is the fundamental thesis of the Gospel, and it embodies, in the last resort, a simple religious judgment. Jesus revealed the Father because He was Himself identical with the Logos, the eternal principle which, according to current speculation, was the medium of God's activity. His life, therefore, was that of a divine being, self-determined, omniscient, endowed with supernatural energies. Not only does Jesus in His own Person reveal God, but He is the absolute revelation. ³

Jesus is the revealer of the truth, since He is the revealer of God. Truth is the spiritual reality; it is the essence of righteousness. Jesus' mission was to bear testimony to the truth. Truth is one of the characteristic words of the Fourth Gospel, and is used invariably in a well-defined and peculiar meaning. The "truth of anything is the spiritual reality of which it is the symbol (cf. the "true vine," "True bread," "true light," etc.). It is assumed that over against the world of visible things there is a world of supernatural realities, which has now for the first time been revealed through Christ. God is "the only true," ⁴ and all other things

¹ John 14:14.

² John 13:31.

³ Scott, The Fourth Gospel, p.210.

⁴ John 1:5.

have "truth" in them according as they reflect his thought and purpose. The mission of Christ who has come forth from God is to declare "truth," in His own Person. Through Him it becomes possible for men, in the midst of earthly change and illusion, to lay hold on the eternal reality.¹ "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."² If men accept the truth as revealed by Jesus they are freed from the bondage of sin. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."³ But if they reject it, they prove themselves to be children of the devil, and unable to recognize the way of escape from sin. "If God were your Father, ye would love me; for I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your Father, the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father thereof. But because I say the truth ye believe me not. Which of you convicteth me of sin? If I say truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth the words of God; for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God."⁴

¹ Scott, The Fourth Gospel, p. 253. ² John 18:34.

³ John 8:32. ⁴ John 8:42-47.

Thus we see that for this Evangelist, sin is the turning away from truth; it is an error in the moral realm. Sin is darkness; it is the privation of something good. To be freed from sin is to be given access to the Light. This term "Light" is constantly recurring in the Gospel. It may be taken as, broadly speaking, identical with "truth." Light is the immemorial symbol of all that is divine and holy; it suggests gladness, security, quickening, illumination. These meanings are all present in the word as used by John. Over against the world of "darkness" there is the upper world of "Light," of reality and perfection; as Christ describes Himself as the "Truth," He claims elsewhere to be the "Light." Men have life through Him because He brings them out into the "Light," makes them partakers of the divine reality from which they have hitherto been debarred by the conditions of their earthly nature. "Light," as thus considered forms a kind of middle term between the two views of the Christian revelation which are set before us in the Gospel. It connects itself, on the one hand, with God from all eternity as the agent of His self-revelation. On the other hand, it implies an ethical motive in God's manifestation of Himself in Christ. His nature was one of Light, of infinite Love. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin." ¹ Real sin, therefore, is a refusal to accept the Light as revealed in Christ. "I am come a Light into the

¹ John 15:22.

world, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness." ¹ "I am the Light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the Light of life." ² Jesus illustrates his meaning of this declaration by the miracle of healing which he perform on the boy who was blind from birth." ³ "When I am in the worl, I am the Light of the world." ⁴

Thus through the process of accepting or rejecting the Light as brought by Jesus into the world, the motive of the Gospel is effected. The judgment is here represented as experience continually being carried on in the hearts of men. "And this is the judgment, that the Light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light; for their works were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light lest this works should be reproved. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the Light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God."⁴ Christ Himself, though not passing judgment on men, is the factor about which the judgment centers. "For God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him. He that believeth on him is not judged; he that believeth not hath been already judged, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." ⁶ "And Jesus said, for judgment came I into this world

1 John 12:46.

2 John 8:12. 3 John 9:1f.

4 John 9:5.

5 John 3:17,18.

6 John 3:19-21.

that they that see not may see; and that they that see may become blind." ¹ "And if any man hear my sayings, and keep them not, I judge them not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth no my sayings, hath one that judge him; the word that I spoke, the same shall judge him." ²

Jesus came not only to be the Light of the world but was also the life of the world. According to Robinson "Light" almost never means to John mere physical life, but is practically always used in a larger "Light," it always has two distinct aspects, a singular, Palestinian and a more scientific or philosophic, Greek one. The purpose of John's Gospel, as stated in 20:31, is that through believing men may have life. The simpler use of the term is based directly upon the Palestinian point of view of Jesus as master and his disciples as students. In Jesus's day the Jews had concentrated their dreams of God's highest blessings in the thought of the Messianic Age to come. The life of the "age to come," i.e., "eternal life," was the greatest hope of every individual. John drops the Jewish conception of a coming Kingdom largely, but retains "eternal life" and energizes it by bringing it down to earth from the clouds. He will have it that the new store of knowledge of God which his students gain from Jesus puts the possession of "eternal life" here and now within

¹ John 9:39.

² John 4:47,48.

their grasp.¹ As the Father hath life in Himself, so He hath given to the Son to have life in Himself. And He, who thus shared from all eternity in the absolute, self-existent life of God, came down into this lower world and identified Himself with our race. Through Christ he entered into fellowship with God, and received into himself the divine life. The gift that seemed to be for ever beyond man's reach was now directly accessible to him.

Thus life through Christ was, for the Evangelist, the highest achievable possibility. Just what the nature of this life is, as given by Jesus, is hard to determine, for nowhere is it defined for us in this Gospel. In the seventeenth chapter (vs.3) we read: "This is life eternal that they might know thee, the holy true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." However this does not define for us what life is but explains that the knowledge of God brings with it the life which he gives. This life is essentially different from the life of men. "For as the Father has life in himself, so too he has granted the Son to have life in himself."² "In him was life."³ "There are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name."⁴ This is a spiritual life of a personal nature. The adjective eternal does not define its quality but rather insures its infinity. Eternal life is an age-long, never ending existence.

¹ Robinson, The Gospel of John, p. 39.

² John 5:26.

³ John 1:4.

⁴ John 20:31.

The quantity is a result of the quality. It must be eternal if it is life at all, because it is related to the eternal God.

Just as John's conceived of judgment as a process now in progress in the world, so it naturally follows that in his conception life should not be postponed to some future time. For him life is here, now. "He that eateth my flesh and drinking my blood hath eternal life." ¹ "He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life." ² John does not discard the popular conception of a final resurrection, but he does not give it the prominent place which it had in the earlier Gospel. "For the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." ³ John's idea of the future life was that it was the fulfilment of the life that should be entered into here on earth. The transformation cometh with the belief that Jesus is the Son of God. This constitutes the passing from death to life. "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall be live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." ⁴ Jesus' mission in the world was to bring men from death into life, as was typified by the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

¹ John 6:53.

³ John 5:28,29.

² John 3:36

⁴ John 11:25,26.

IV. COMMUNICATION OF LIFE TO THE DISCIPLES

Life is the gift of God through Christ. But how if this life to be communicated to the disciples? To answer this question is the practical religious purpose of the Fourth Gospel. In his attempt to set forth the various conditions necessary for a union with God, John blends three conceptions into one, the intellectual, the volitional, and the mystical relationship.

First, there is the strong intellectual element of believing that Christ is the Son of God. To believe is to accept the doctrinal hypothesis; it is assending to a dogma. "For except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." ¹ "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believeth thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I have believeth that thou art the Christ, the son of God, even he that cometh into the world." ²

Again we find the idea of belief expressed in the words: "But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name." ³ "that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world: but that the world should be saved through him. He that believeth not hath been judged already because he hath

¹ John 8:4.

² John 11:25-27.

³ John 1:12.

not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." ¹

These passages suggest more than a mere intellectual assent to the doctrine that is the Son of God. Here the idea of trust and faith is brought out. As men are trustful of God also they must place their trust in Jesus.

John seeks in every possible way to so glorify Christ that men cannot fail to see that their belief in him is justified. As we have already noted, he ascribes to him supernatural power and personality. All miracles are performed as signs to prove the justification of belief. "If I do not the work of my Father, believe me not. But if I do them, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." ² "many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in his name." ³ This belief follows after one has appreciated the work of Jesus. It embodies in it a religious experience in which one has recognized his divine power. Belief is an outcome of knowing Jesus. "Now they know that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are from thee: for the words which thou givest me I have given unto them; and they received them, and knew of a truth that I came forth from thee, and they believed that thou didst send me." ⁴ The immediate condition of belief is "knowledge." These two ideas, are

1 John 3:16-18.

3 John 20:30,31.

2 John 10:37,28.

4 John 17:7,8.

several times conjoined in such a way that they might seem to be practically one. "They have known surely that I came out from Thee, and have believed that Thou didst send me." ¹

This intimate knowledge of Christ, which implies a sympathetic relationship with him, is only made possible when men are willing to obey his commands. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself." ² "Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father devil, and the lusts of your father it is your your will to do." ³ "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reprov'd. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God." ⁴ "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." ⁵ Thus by the volitional process of obedience to the ethical demands made by Christ men are given a knowledge of God which makes it possible for them to believe him.

Aside from the intellectual and volitional processes involved, there is still a third factor necessary before the spiritual union with Christ can be effected. This is represented by the mystical relationship between God and men. In

1 John 17:7.

2 John 7:17.

3 John 8:43,44.

4 John 3:20,21.

5 John 14:21.

His words, Christ offers Himself to his people; but something further is necessary before they can fully participate in His ethical life. He requires that they should enter into a relation of permanent union with Him, abiding in Him continually, like the branches in the vine. Regard from this side, the doctrine of union with Christ is purely ethical and religious. The Evangelist no longer thinks of life as a higher essence, imparted magically through the inflow of the heavenly nature into the earthly. To be united with Christ is to enter into living fellowship with Him - into fellowship so real and intimate that His mind becomes our mind. This doctrine of a mystical union, in which the higher life flows uninterruptedly from Christ to the believer, contains the central and characteristic thought of the Fourth Gospel.¹

"No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him."² "manifested thy name unto the men whom thou hast given me out of the world: thine they were, and thou givest them to me are from thee: I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me."³ "Father, I desire that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am."⁴

Through this mystical drawing power of God Himself, man is given fellowship with Christ. An entire change of nature must take place before one can enter this fellowship. Such a change in Man's nature is spoken of by John in symbolical language.

1 Scott, The Fourth Gospel, p. 289. 2 John 6:44.

3 John 17:6,7. 4 John 17:24.

"Except one be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God..... Except one be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." ¹ Thus the new life as brought by Jesus, is nothing less than a second beginning. This life is the Spirit and is not dependent on the will of man. This change in Man's life is to be symbolized by the external rite of baptism. Baptism is the mark of the beginning of a new experience in Christ. It in itself is useless except as it is the representation of the work of the Spirit.

Christ's very nature is now shared with the individual who has experienced rebirth. But how this process is actually accomplished is a different question to answer. The Evangelist make use of several ideas to convey his thought. First of all, the words of Christ are regarded by the Evangelist as a part of the very nature of Christ, and through them he is able to give himself to men. "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and life." ² "Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go?" "thou hast the words of eternal life." ³ "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you." ⁴ "His words give life, for they are a part of his very Being. Those who believeth him are unable to accept it. "He that is of God heareth the words of

1 John 3:3,5.

3 John 6:68.

2 John 6:63.

4 John 15:7.

God: for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God." ¹

Again the communication of life is expressed in symbolical language. Jesus offers himself as the Bread of life. "My Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world.....Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger." ² This discourse follows the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, which John uses as a symbol of the spiritual bread with which Jesus feeds all who come to Him. "This is the bread which cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: yea, and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world." ³ Thus John interpretes for us the Lord's Supper. Through this sacrament Christ continues to give Himself to men. Wherever this rite is observed Christian believers renew fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Living water of another symbol whereby John represents the inward life-giving power of Jesus. "thou knowest the gift of God and who it is that saith to thee, Give to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given these living water.....Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I give

¹ John 8:37.

² John 6:33.

³ John 6:50,51.

⁴ John 4:10,13, 14.

him shall become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life." ¹ "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from within shall flow rivers of living water." ²

This inward abiding presence of Christ is perhaps best illustrated by the allegory found in the fifteenth chapter. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away; and every branch tha beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit. Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken ubto you. Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit if itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same branch beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my word abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples. Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you: abide ye in my love." ³ This allegory teaches the significance of Jesus as the source of life as nothing else could. Spiritual fruitness is

¹ John 4:10,13,14.

² John 7L37,38.

³ John 15:1-9.

dependent upon vital union with him, and life is viewed as a higher kind of existence which can be attained only through mystical union with Jesus, the giver of life. This is a mutual relationship between God and man experienced through Jesus the mediator.

V THE RETURN OF JESUS: THE SPIRIT

It was not for his generation only that John did his work. His real aim is to elucidated, in the light of history, the abiding facts of Christian experience. "There are written, that ye may believe." ¹ Thus he had made a permanent record that men of all generations might read of Jesus, the life giver. "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may also be one; even as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me." ² These words reveal to us the fact that the writer had in mind a broader scope for his mission than for men of his own generation only. Jesus' revelation was by no means exhausted. His death was not the end of his work but inst instead was only the beginning of a greater mission. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself." ³ Death after him was not humiliation, but was a lifting up to a place of exaltation so that all men might see his glory. It was a signal by which he will attract to himself all those who have in them the

1 John 20:31.

2 John 17:20,21.

3 John 12:32.

craving for the truer life. In his earthly life Jesus was able to manifest himself to only a few disciples, but by his death all earthly limitations were broken down. He was now able to give himself to the entire world. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." ¹ The earthly life of Jesus was only the manifestation of what the greater work of Christ should be. Death was for him an episode in his life in its eternity. As his earthly life was necessary for the revelation of the Father's nature, so his return to the Father was also necessary that men of all ages might know God. "I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd. Therefore doth the Father Love, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again." ² "nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you." ³

Two ideas which McCown uses, of the coming of the Spirit and the return of Christ, are identified. Jesus is coming again, in a little while, not on the clouds, but in. According to Dr. McCown John wishes to identify them. Only the spiritual Christ who is always to be present in the world

1 John 12:24.

2 John 10:15-17.

3 John 16:3.

can say, "Remain in me, as I remain in you,"¹ Just as in Ro,8 Paul speaks of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and Christ as one and the same, so in the Fourth Gospel the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, and Christ Himself are one.²

Professor Robinson of Chicago maintains that the Holy Spirit is the object of Jesus' going and the return of Jesus always means to him the coming of the Spirit, for to him the object of Jesus return and second stay with his later disciples was to confer this gift of the Spirit upon them. Hence we are not surprised to read in this particular Gospel that at Jesus' reappearance to his Galilean disciple "He breathed on them, and says to them, Receive the Holy Spirit."³

The identification of the bringing of the Spirit as the great object and the sufficient explanation of his "coming again" holds true in the following verses John 14:20-24. In verses 25 ff. we have this same point view in regard to the second coming carried a step further. The "Helper" previously referred the Holy Spirit will "bring to remembrance" that Jesus said "I go away, and I return" and his very presence will be the absolutely satisfactory answer and put a stop once for all to all speculation over what he was referring to when he said "I go away and return."

On the side of method, this was a feat of religious statemanship on John's part. He made no direct attack upon

1 John 15:4. 2 McCown, The Promise of His Coming, p.210.

3 B.W. Robinson, The Gospel of John, p. 253.

those who took the apocalyptic prophecies literally. Yet he did not evade but answered clearly and definitely all who were asking the question, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Jesus has already returned and is present spiritually in our midst, answered John, and put his answer to positive use in the enrichment of the religious consciousness of his hearers. Again in verse 28 Jesus says, "I go away, and I come to you." The position taken and unfolded at length in the chapter is that the promise of the Second Coming is no longer promise, but fulfilment for every believer who has open his heart that Jesus might dwell there, along with the gift of Eternal Life that he comes bearing with him.¹

No various functions are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. He will teach the disciples,² declare Christ's truth,³ guide the disciples into all the truth of Christ,⁴ bring his teaching home to the recollection of his followers,⁵ glorify Christ and bear testimony concerning him,⁶ and convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.⁷ He will hold constant fellowship with the disciples,⁸ He will continually abide at their side and dwell within them as a source of inspiration.⁹ Dr. Stevens hold this idea that the world of the Spirit's activity is the same as that of Christ. He is the continuator of the redemptive process in the world; he makes

1 B.W. Robinson, The Gospel of John, p. 218.

2 John 14:26.

3 John 16:14.

4 John 16:13.

5 John 14:26.

6 John 14:14,15.

7 John 16:8.

8 John 14:18.

9 John 14:17.

real an effective in human life the truth which the earthly mission of Christ revealed. Hence the Spirit of truth interpretes these divine realities which constitute the inner meaning of the life of Jesus and fosters in men the spiritual life which accords with them.¹

As to the Spirit's coming and his own coming to his disciples Dr. Stevens agrees with Dr. Robinson of Chicago. "He (the Spirit) abideth with you, and shall be in you, I will not leave you desolate: I come to you." In connection with the promise of the Spirit Jesus assures his followers that they shall soon behold him again: "A little while, and ye behold me no more, and again a little while, and ye shall see me."² This is understood to mean that although he will soon be withdrawn from their physical sight, he will still be spiritually present with them and they shall see him with the eye of the spirit. In both manifestations he is the same; the name "Holy Spirit" is but a personification of the invisible relation which he will sustain to them after his ascension. The same identification of Christ and the Spirit is found in the words of Jesus after his resurrection on which he breathed on his disciples and said: "Receive ye the Holy Spirit."³ In reality, the Spirit is identical with Himself.⁴

Thus in the same breath, Jesus speaks of the coming of the Comforter, who is the Spirit of truth, and of his own

1 Stevens, The Theology of the New Testament, p. 214.

2 John 16:16. 3 John 20:22.

4 Stevens, The Theology of New Testament, p. 215.

return. The two ideas seem to be interchangeable. Thus the coming of the Spirit is in reality the return of Jesus Himself as a spiritual presence in the hearts of his disciples. He is not the Logos the same Jesus of history now appearing in spiritual form. He will carry on the work which Jesus did while on earth. This Gospel connects the whole influence of the Spirit of God in the human heart with personality of Jesus of Nazareth.

This second coming of Jesus followed immediately after his departure from the earth. "I will not leave you desolate; I come unto you, yet a little while, the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me; because I live, ye shall live also." ¹ He had thus told his disciples while with them on earth that he would return in a little while, but they had not understand what he had meant by "a little while." "A little while, and ye behold me no more; and again a little while ye shall see me. Some of his disciples therefore said to one another, What is this that he saith unto us, a little while, and ye behold me not; and again a little while, and ye shall see me; and because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, a little while? We know not what he saith. John interpretes the Parousia as already having taken places, thus making it identical with the coming of the Spirit. Already the brief interview of time

1 John 14:18,19.

had elapsed. It had been a time of anguish and sorrow to the disciples for they had not realized the joy that was to be theirs as soon as Jesus should return to the Father. "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one takes from you."¹

This return was not outward manifestation to the world, but would be known only to the believers. "Yet a little while and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me; because I live ye shall also live."² "I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him; for he abideth with you and shall be in you."³ It was to be an inward experience which the unbelieving world could not see nor understand. The believers would know him, for he was to be the same Jesus who had lived with them on earth. His body, now changed and freed from all earthly limitations, could pass through closed doors; but it was, nevertheless, his own body.

1 John 16:21,22.

2 John 14:19.

3 John 14:16,17.

This is made very clear to us by the experience that Thomas had with him. "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas was with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand and put it unto my side and be not faithless but believing. Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God." Thus he is proved to be the same familiar character which the disciples had always known, dwelling in the body they themselves could recognize; he is not merely an ethereal spirit.

"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto my Father, but go unto my brethren and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." ¹ Thus it seems that John wishes to represent the ascension to the Father as following immediately after the resurrection. Between the time that Jesus sees Mary and forbids her to touch him, and his return to his disciples on that same evening, when he permits them to handle him, the ascension has taken place. His body has now been transformed.

While Jesus had been with them on earth, the disciples had not been able to wholly understand Jesus' words and works, "Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter." ² "These things

1 John 20:17.

2 John 13:3.

have I spoken unto you in dark sayings, but shall tell you plainly of the Father." ¹ Now they were to know him more intimately and would understand him, for he was to abide in their very hearts. Before, he could not tell them all that he would, but he will reveal himself fully to them through the Spirit. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth; for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak; and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you." ²

Hereafter Jesus' disciples are to dwell with him in mansions prepared for them by him. "In my Father's home are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." ³ Thus by his return in the hearts of the believers, Jesus ushers his disciples into the eternal mansions, or spiritual abiding places, which he has prepared for them. This experience takes place at the time of his return to the Father and is not postponed to some indefinite future time. It will occur while the disciples are still living on earth. They are not to be carried away from

1 John 16:25.

2 John 16:12-14.

3 John 14:2,3.

the world, but are to be left in the world. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one." ¹

From henceforth the disciples are to be in a spiritual union with Christ; this is life eternal. "Father, I declare that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." ² He will abide in them and they will abide in him and no one can take away their joy from them." ³ It is only through this permanent union with Christ that the disciples can bear spiritual fruit. It is to this end that they have been called into discipleship. "Yet did not choose me, but I choose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and your fruit should abide." ⁴ "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away." ⁵ "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples." Spiritual fruit bearing is the ultimate outcome of the abiding life in Jesus Christ.

IV. CONCLUSION

What then is the religious significance of Jesus as found in John's Gospel? By means of the indwelling Logos in the Jesus of history, God is revealed to the world. He is the only way whereby man can come to God and thus know the

1 John 17:15.

2 John 17:27.

3 John 16:22.

4 John 15:16.

5 John 15:2.

truth. Therefore rejection of Jesus is the essence of sin.

Judgment thus rests with men in his attitude toward God as revealed in Jesus.

Jesus, now the heavenly Being, is set free from all earthly limitation of time and space. He can now continue his work of revelation through all ages. His message is adapted to each new generation. But it is only as we know his earthly life that we can appreciate God as he revealed him. Christ's historical manifestation conveys a different message to each succeeding time, but can never be supereded. Thus John was de-localized and de-materialized Jesus, but was not removed him from history. Paul had found Jesus by spiritual contact with him personally, that had emancipated him from slavery to Jewish ceremonialism and legalism. In like manner John bases his religion upon the power of Jesus personally manifested in his own life and in the lives of other Christians. John finds both the simpler and the more philosophic use suited to his purpose of conveying to his audience the significance of the historical Jesus. Jesus is the Logos, the Light, and the Life. Writing as he does, so long after Jesus' earthly life had closed, John recognizes the fact that Christianity is bound up inseparably with the life of Jesus.

St. John 's contribution to the spread of Christianity through the world consisted in thus linking together a Palestinian and a Greek way of stating the Christian way of Salvation

or emancipation from the material so as to express with double power the religious significance of Jesus. It gave the Christian gospel a cosmic and scientific basis in present life. It universalized its appeal. Every one wishes life, more abundant life. It is the great consuming desire of humanity. John wrote of Jesus as he himself had known him. All who would accept Jesus as he himself had done, might have this same fellowship with him. This Gospel is thus a record of John's own experience in Christ. John proclaims to every one: in him is Life, and "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." (20:29)

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